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ABSTRACT

This paper consists of 16 suggestions for retaining nontraditional students in classes in which it is unusual for them to participate. Emphasis is on female students in traditionally all-male fields, such as trade and industrial courses. Some of the suggestions are the following: (1) have more than one nontraditional student in a class; (2) give extra help to nontraditional students in areas in which they have not had much background; (3) don't tell dirty jokes and watch out for sexual harassment; (4) encourage open discussion of tensions; (5) don't be patronizing or chivalrous; (6) treat all students alike; (7) establish support groups for nontraditional students; (8) use gender-free terms and occupational titles; (9) help students to identify sex stereotypes; and (10) invite role models into the classroom. (KC)

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STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

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STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

1. Cluster students, avoid having only 1 non-traditional student in a class.

2. Give extra help in areas where the non-traditional student is not likely to have had as much exposure as the traditional student. (For example -- a girl in auto mechanics may not have had as much exposure to automobiles while growing up as the boys and may not be as familiar with the shop terminology. She would hesitate to ask questions for fear of being ridiculed by the boys. It's important for the shop teacher to make sure the student is not getting lost. Help sessions should be held with students separately rather than slowing up the class.)

3. Don't isolate or single out in any way the non-traditional student.

4. Don't tell dirty jokes or allow them to be told, and watch out for sexual harassment in the guise of "kidding around".

5. If tensions arise, encourage students to talk them out in the open.

6. Don't be patronizing, over-protective, or "chivalrous", and don't grant special favors to non-traditional students. Show girls how to lift rather than lifting things for them, require that they learn to use all of the equipment and give them projects which are as challenging as the ones the boys work on.

7. Don't allow boys to use bad language, but not girls -- no one should be allowed to use bad language in the shop.

8. Establish support groups for non-traditional students.

9. Give strong encouragement: "You can do it." "You're doing well, try it."

10. Be alert to the fact that the traditional students sometimes look upon the non-traditional students as "threats". They sabotage tools and projects, purposely tell dirty jokes or use bad language in front of non-traditional students to make them feel uncomfortable, and sometimes withhold information or help they would normally give another student.

11. Be sure that students of both sexes receive the same course content, the same learning activities and the same projects. The same grading system should be used for all students.

12. Use gender free terms and occupational titles (drafter, machinist, etc.) There is no such thing (in the eyes of students) as a generic "he".

13. Discuss sex stereotyping and discrimination as part of the regular course content. Involve students in identifying examples of bias and stereotyping in textbooks, job descriptions, job application forms, etc.

14. Help students identify sex stereotyping/discrimination in their daily lives.

15. Invite role models (people doing non-traditional work) to visit the shop and talk with students (unions can be helpful in identifying these individuals).

16. Encourage students to tell you (anonymously) about any stereotyping/bias/discrimination they feel is occurring in your shop.

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